

AUBURN CIRCLE

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How to Submit Your Work

At the beginning of each semester, *The Auburn Circle* takes submissions for that semester's publication. Submissions include art, interior design, graphic design, poetry, photography, fiction, nonfiction, fashion, architecture, and any other documentable form of literature or art.

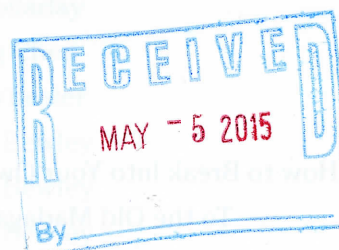
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I know that most things are greater
than the sums of their parts, / And
that's the real definition of art.

Rachel Kann
from her poem "i Know This"



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Dedicated to Dafni Greene

The editors of *The Auburn Circle* would like to dedicate this issue to our advisor, Dafni Greene.

Dafni, thank you for a decade of service to Auburn's student media. Thank you for giving us your expert guidance while still allowing us to figure out some things on our own.

Thank you for your dedication, and thank you for supporting your students during their time at Auburn and after they graduate.

We love you!

Letter from the Editor

Okay, I'll admit it: finding an epigraph for the magazine is usually the result of half an hour on BrainyQuotes.com. We look for authors and artists with name recognition and try to find meaningful quotes, even if we don't pay much attention to context. Well, things are changing up at *The Circle*, as you may have heard, and this semester we went for something a little more personal. Rayna, a graduating Visual Arts editor, sent me two lines from contemporary poet Rachel Kann, whose work has been featured on TEDx, NPR, and *Welcome to Night Vale*. I loved the lines (and the whole poem for that matter), and it's pretty clear to me that they apply not just to art but also to our organization in general.

What *The Auburn Circle* does is pretty special. We create a space for students to express themselves and showcase their talents. And, as a totally student-run and (fiercely) editorially independent organization, we couldn't do it without help from every single person on staff. The staff makes the magazine, both literally and figuratively. This February, a freshman editor on our staff who I respect a great deal wrote an opinion piece for *The Plainsman* in which she called "the Auburn Family" a marketing ploy. Freshman year, I would have agreed with her, but now that senior-year sentimentality is setting in and I have to say goodbye to a lot of dear friends, I think that it's as much a family as you make it.

Okay, that got a little gooey. Sorry. In my opinion, this is a really special edition of the magazine. We've got a load of great studio art, from Forrest Babington's painting (p. 70) to Shannon Bewley's sculpture (p. 46). As for poetry, you'll find some veteran *Circle* writers at the top of their game, as well as impressive writing from freshmen Emily Chapman (p. 50), Mary Butgereit (p. 75), and others. And the prose is on point as well. My personal favorites include "Erasure" by Rayna McGuire (p. 18) and "By Lantern Light" by Richard Tyler (p. 8). Let's not forget the stunning photography, which I'm sure will speak for itself.

There is so much exciting work in this book. All I know is that if there is any such thing as the Auburn Family, *The Circle* is its art-and-story-plastered refrigerator door. And I'm proud to have been a part of that.

Michelle Bangson
Editor in Chief



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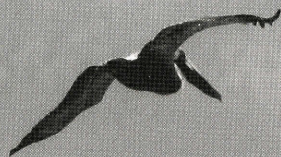
Benjamin Arnberg

ADVISOR

Dafni Greene

By Lantern Light

Fiction by Richard Tyler



"Vegetarians don't hunt."

"But, no. Really? You've never been hunting?" he asks.

I am taller than he is, by my hair. We'd become friends during my last semester of high school, when I was teacher's aide for his sophomore English class. Mostly I read while they talked about Steinbeck. I watched for cheaters during tests and didn't see him when he'd crane, how his neck flexed as he leaned towards his neighbor. He was the youngest of four brothers, all of them on the football team except for him—the first to make it into an honor's class. He's not actually smart, but he's earnest, which I kind of like. "What would I hunt for?" I ask. "Does foraging for mushrooms count?"

"Shit no, it doesn't," he says, stretching his long arms. "You've gotta come, man. At least once. Get some hair on that chest."

Two weeks after graduation, I pull into his driveway, empty except for his truck, which is a hand-me-down from his oldest brother. The kind with mufflers removed and large tires. He has already started loading the truck, the door to his house swinging loose. I check my reflection in the side mirror. Hair: still good. Teeth: yes. He comes back out of the house as I'm walking up, tan arms straining as he loads a cooler in the truck bed. My own shoulders are still peeling from the first day of summer.

"Where is everyone?" I ask. "I've never seen it so dead here." The yard is quiet. Usually his brothers were outside with rap music blaring, working on tractors or cars, lifting weights, or hitting things with a stick. They are loud and raw in a way my family has never been. You can actually hear the cicadas today.

"They're all at the lake for the weekend."

"You didn't want to go?"

"Nah, I've been up there all week." He glances at me before he leans over to lift a massive backpack, the muscles in his shoulders rolling over each other. "Besides, we gotta get you hunting."

"Yeah, totally. Can't wait to go hunting." He reaches past me to grab my bag. "I brought quinoa!"

We drive for hours. North, until the ground forgets flatness and heaves itself into mountains

around us. We trade the interstate for smaller roads. Pass through towns where the speed limit is thirty-five and the police officer sits on the porch outside the bar shaking his finger at us as we blow through. I watch him as he drives without a map. The trees close in around us.

We arrive late in the afternoon at his family's land. There's a cabin somewhere that I've heard his brothers take girls on hunting trips, but I've seen pictures of the place, and it's a mausoleum of the family's kills. Eyes on every wall. When he insists that I have an authentic experience, complete with shitting in the woods, I'm relieved. It should be brighter here, but we are low in the valley, and the sun is already on the wrong side of the mountain. We stop along a road overgrown with weeds and walk the rest of the way to the campsite. There is a creek nearby, with a pool for bathing. The pine and leaves are soft underfoot. It smells fresh.

"Why don't you see if you can find some firewood?" he says, throwing down the tent and the rest of the supplies he hauled from the truck. "I'll set up camp while you do that." I toss my backpack next to the pile and wander off into the brush.

Once I've gathered enough sticks, I set them up into a teepee like I've seen on tv, but he stops me when I move to light them with the matches I brought.

"Here, watch this," he says, pulling out a flint and steel. Soon, there is a fire, knee-high.

"That actually is pretty impressive," I say through the smoke. He grins and tosses another log onto the fire.

The next day he wakes me up early with a rendition of reveille that he whistles into my ear. We set out to set traps along a deer path his brother found on their last trip.

"Rabbits and raccoons and stuff use it, too," he says. I watch him as he sets the snares, the way his brothers taught him. I hold back a branch or hand him the knife, as required. The way his hands, larger, rougher than mine can manage such delicate knots. "See?" he looks at me while he works. "They step into it, like so," using a stick to illustrate, "and snap! It breaks their neck and lifts them off the ground so the coyotes and bears can't get them." I swallow. "We'll come back later tonight to check them."

"Isn't this technically more trapping than hunting?" I ask. "It's basically the same thing as foraging if we're just going around picking dead things out of trees." He laughs and punches me in the arm, bro-style, and moves on, so confident in the woods.

After the traps are set, ten in all, in a loose arc around the camp, we head back for lunch.

After, he puts me to work helping to make another type of trap we'll set tomorrow. This one requires a stake. I'm fumbling with the stick he gives me, trying to make a sharp end with the Swiss Army I picked up on the way to his house.

"No, you're using the wrong knife," he says. "You'll cut your thumb off with that dull shit. Here, use mine." He hands me his knife, but I'm still making a mess of it, so he takes my hand, shows me the motion. "Yeah, you got it. Now make about twelve more and we'll have rabbit tomorrow for dinner."

Around three he says we should start checking the snares we set earlier. That way we'll have daylight if we caught anything and need to clean it. The first four traps are empty, and I'm slightly disappointed. I know the traps work; the creepy fuck-cabin is testament to their effectiveness.

The fifth has done its job.

A raccoon, caught in all the wrong ways. Instead of the quick jerk to the neck that I saw the stick suffer, he's standing there, caught by his left, front paw. Leg clearly broken, shoulder ripped from the socket. The sounds he's making are awful as we come closer, and his hind feet are scraping the ground.

"Shit," he says.

"What're we gonna do?"

"I don't know."

"Can you eat raccoon?"

"Leave him," he says, blinking as he looks away.

"What? We can't leave him. Cut him loose. Make a cast out of sticks or something."

"It's too late for that. There're already ants." Where the wire of the snare cut into his wrist there is a red bracelet where the skin of his arm has pulled back like a sleeve. I look closer and see a trail of ants, drawn to the blood, forming a line, up his hind legs that he keeps shifting, up across his chest, and already at work on the

exposed muscle. A few stray from the line and wander across his face.

"You've got to kill it. Put it out of its misery."

"I can't," he says, taking a couple steps back. His eyes are wide, like when the teacher would announce a pop quiz.

"You have to."

"I can't. I really can't." His voice stretches and he keeps blinking. "I've never actually had to kill anything. They're usually dead. They're supposed to be dead." He's actually crying now, crouched down with his head in his hands. "You do it."

"I don't know how to kill an animal." I watch him crying, the raccoon rasping in the background. I pull out my Swiss Army again and walk over to the raccoon and stab him in the chest, the same place that I feel my cat's heart beating when he's curled in my lap.

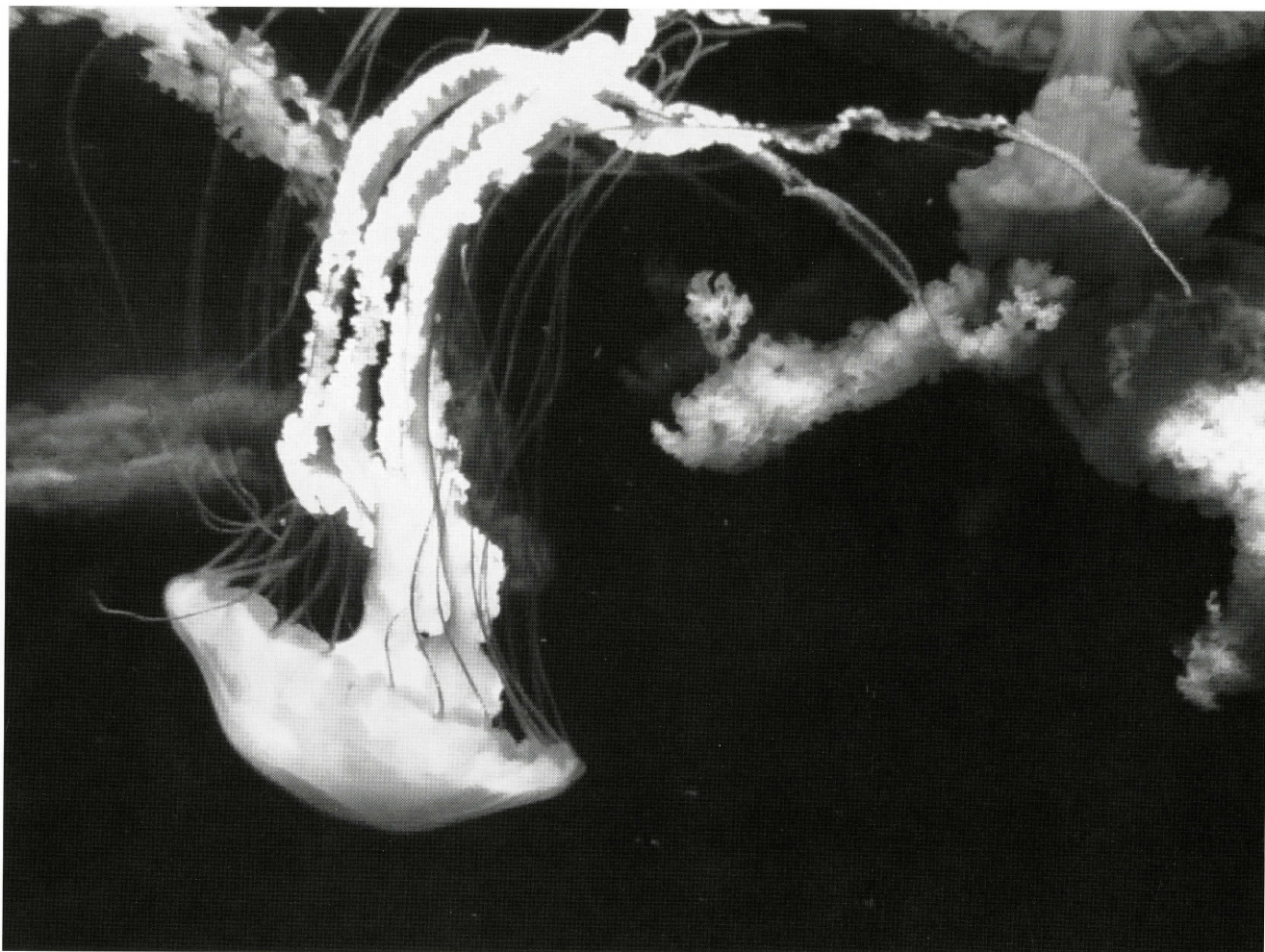
Ethan looks up from where he's been crying, surprised, and watches as I cut the wire, ending the puppet show. Watches as I lay his body, not even warm, along the line of ants. I stand there, watching for a moment, then bend down to dip my thumb in the red leaves around his body. I smear blood on my forehead and look at him, standing a few steps away. He won't look back. I walk over and mark his, as well, and start along the trail towards the camp. He follows at a distance.

When we get back, the matches that I brought are ruined by the early dew and won't light. Ethan can't get his hands to work and can't manage even a spark from the flint and steel so we split a cold can of lentils by lantern light while the crickets call to each other.

Later, in the tent, as I move past him to my sleeping bag, he grabs me and pulls me to him. "Thank you," he says, kissing me until I move away. ●



"Wilted" by Megan Phillips
Canon Rebel T1i (SLR)



"Jellyfish I" by Lydia Sweeney
Canon PowerShot

Lazarus

Lazarus, waiting and waxing like
a candle, a lowering light

His will written like spider's lace
Upon his leather palm

Soon to join a lineage beneath
wet mud and worms

A life measured in wails
Swallowed for the last time

Breaths linger, lag
and a widow cries out

Poetry by Ande Nichols



"Jellyfish II" by Lydia Sweeney
Canon PowerShot



Samantha

Nonfiction by Alicia Jackson

The air is thin in the morning. Your breath shows up in a cloud of white smoke in front of you as you let out a sigh on the way to your car. Is it relief... Are you glad to be rid of her, to be rid of them? The boys are still asleep; they slept through the whole night, thankfully. The boys will stay home today and as long as you need them to.

The boys are up soon after you leave. A fight probably causes them to leave their beds. They are hungry and need breakfast, so they go to Samantha.

Samantha had a list of chores for every morning and every night. As she walked into the building for school she would repeat them to herself over and over to make sure she hadn't forgotten anything. If she had, it wouldn't take long to find out which one, because you would storm into the school and punish her in front of everyone. Punish her for forgetting, for making you come here and therefore be late to work.

Red hair, green eyes, and a face full of freckles. She always wore boys' clothes, and they always looked old and grungy. The only items she ever wore that were meant for girls were her tennis shoes, pink and white with silver lines going down the sides that had little stars on them that lit up when she walked. Her hair was never brushed, probably because the task had been left up to her. It always smelled like bubble gum, and so she used to chew on it, claiming that it tasted as good as it smelled. On picture day she would show up in nice pants, a frilly top, and those light-up sneakers. She had a crush on a boy named Robby who she made fun of every chance she got. Robby didn't make it hard, being allergic to peas, and beans, and pasta, and cheese, and tomato sauce. Sam loved to start with a joke about peas and let that be a segue into how Robby couldn't eat them, or anything. The lunchroom never got the note about his allergies, or maybe his mom never wrote one. So instead of eating at lunch Robby would chase Sam around the room until a teacher caught them and Sam lost her recess privileges. Things always seemed to work like that for Sam. She could get caught goofing around with ten other kids, but only Sam would get penalized for it—though it never seemed to bother her much, she was still all go go go.

The boys call for their sister, they look for her everywhere in the tiny house. Did she go to school without them?

You are having an okay day, didn't have to go up to that school again for that girl. You don't even think about it as you work, do you? Not until the boss calls you up into the office and says that you should go home, the police and guys from the fire department are at your house. Your house, those boys, what did they do now, and why wasn't that girl watching them.

Her hair always smelled like bubble gum, and so she used to chew on it, claiming that it tasted as good as it smelled.

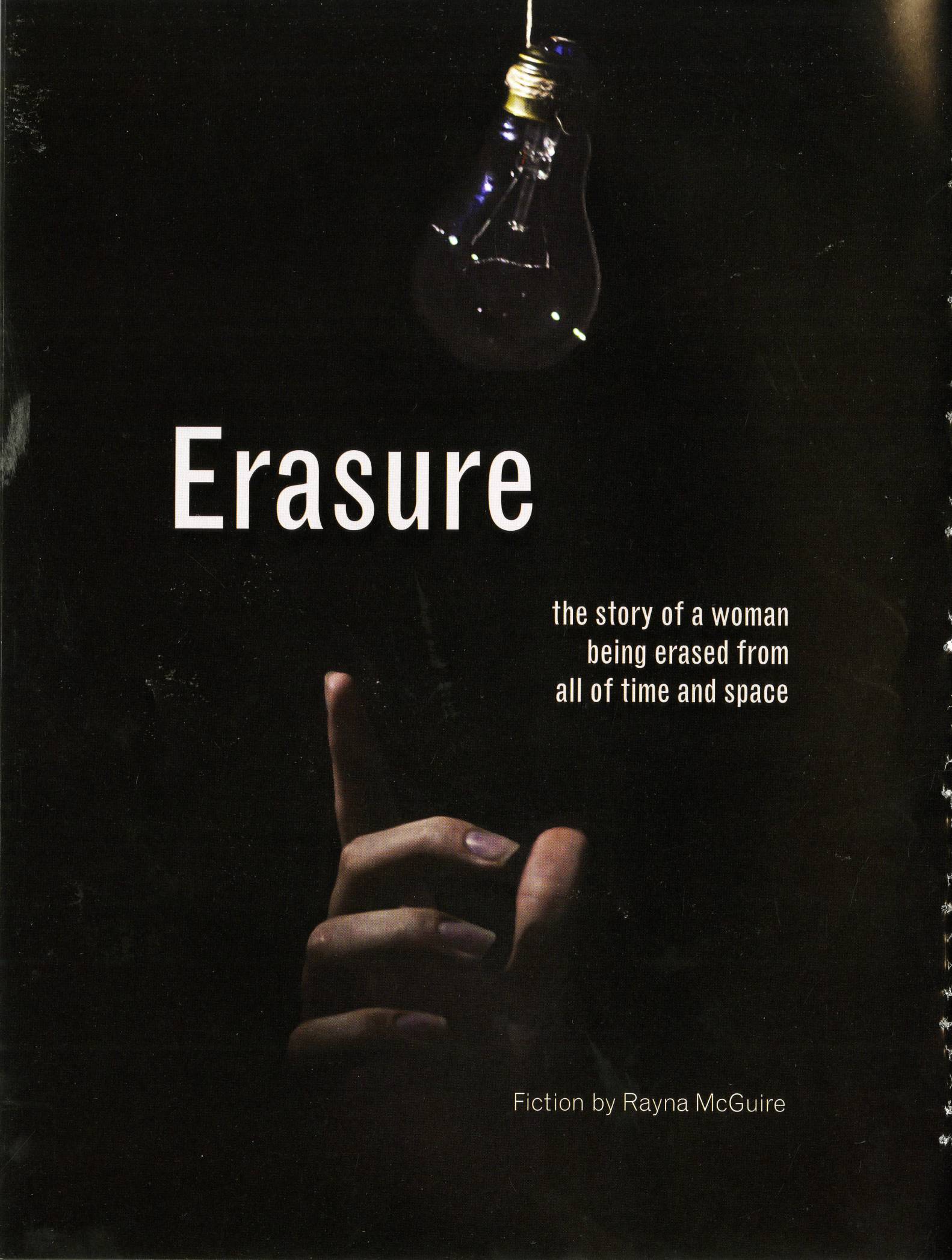
The boys give up on Samantha and try to cook on their own. The little six-year-olds don't know how to cook, or even work an oven. When the fire starts they run for the woods. They run and run until one of them sees something. One of them remembers Samantha. But Samantha doesn't get up and run with them, or ask what in the world they were thinking trying to cook on their own. In fact Samantha doesn't really look like Samantha laying there in the snow.

You get to the house and it hits you. Green eyes, red hair, and a face full of freckles. Your daughter—last night, it wasn't your wife you were fighting with, drunk and confused and angry, it was your daughter.

Fourth grade started minus one student who was later discovered in the woods behind her tiny, rundown house. Hair still red, face full of freckles, eyes a little less green. Sam never told anyone that her father had a drinking problem, or that her mom had left when she was three because of it. Not many knew that after school she would walk around until it was dark, until her dad had to go to work. Not many new that he would get angry when he drank, but only angry with Samantha. The first half of fourth grade year went by without anyone mourning, or buying flowers, or shedding one tear. Maybe they figured it out in the end, and maybe they thought Sam was off at some other school going nonstop and chewing her bubble gum hair. ●



"Hard-Boiled by Shannon Bewley
Charcoal



Erasure

the story of a woman
being erased from
all of time and space

Fiction by Rayna McGuire

I dream of a house in paper.

Before me a suburban dream in shoddy, purple lines. It looks like the houses I drew in the second grade. I used to live in that house. It wasn't purple but I used to live in that house made of colored wax with its giant trees. Back when all the little stick figures and the brown, scribble dog lived there too.

But the thing about wax is that it melts. It crumbles, it sinks in on itself, and when it happens to tiny crayon houses, not all the little stick figures can come home. So they don't. Because there's room for a brain, but no room for a heart in a stick figure. The people quit working, the house quits working, and the scribble dog dies.

I wake up and put on shoes. I drive by that house in that neighborhood and look in the windows. The lawn is a mess. Mama's stones in the garden have been overrun, our giant trees are small and fraying. I go home and draw in crayon for the first time in years.

I do all this, and I sleep peacefully for 36 nights.

I then dream of a girl in white.

She wears her beauty on her skin. She is luminous. She stands before a river barely visible it's so clear. A crowd has gathered and they marvel at her arms outstretched like branches, the sun filters through her and she beams. She speaks lightly, her voice a yawn as she reaches ever outward.

She trills of the afterlife, growing louder, stronger. How horrid it is to fall into eternity. To dissolve from something in specific to nothing in particular- and worst of all, the noise. The endless noise of all there ever was and shall ever be voicing all at once a desire for life. She couldn't find her ears to plug them or the hands she once thought so beautiful. So long was she Everything that she had forgotten her Self. The one she dearly loved and had been driven mad with longing for. She had missed her hands, her arms, her hair, her legs, her body all her own. Her thoughts without the tides of millennia were quiet and pleased and she spoke them now as loudly as she could.

She said she had returned from that horrible place without the intention of ever going back. She had found that to live forever and to end

completely, were the same hell, and that if those were what it meant to End, then she would have no end. She condemned them both with all her breath as she prized and admired her singular self.

I wake up with her gaze still staring pointedly through me. I run water in my bath and wash my arms, my hair, my legs, with my hands which I stare at for hours after. I breathe deeply to fill my whole being and hold the universe inside me. I let myself feel that I am bigger than it. I let it go

because I am a benevolent god and all things, even gods, must let go. I inhale again and breathe out all of Creation onto my warm, damp skin hoping that it sticks.

I do all this, and I sleep peacefully for 23 nights.

A spectra of darkness,
a reaper cut from night.
It is taller than a man
should be, skinnier too.

I next dream of a room of children.

The room is glaring and the children are playing. All around are columns of ivory, the ceiling too high to see. There are no windows, no doors, no color but white, and still the children play. Alone I sit by the wayside watching when it comes.

A spectra of darkness, a reaper cut from night. It is taller than a man should be, skinnier too. It stares with a featureless face into my eyes, the eyes of a child I haven't ever been. A slight arm extends, spidery fingers, bone white, reach out to me.

I wake up with a start and can't breathe. A soundless question presses down on my lungs and arms. One I'm not sure I didn't answer. Someone I can't recall tells me waking suddenly means that another you in another time has died.

I ponder this for 12 dreamless nights.

For three nights I dream of baby boys.

One I find in a windmill down in a valley, the sky filling with black smoke. The second I rock gently in a chair on the porch of a house alone.



"DEAD" by Joseph Wheeler
Linocut on paper

Neither of us can cry. We want to. The last is given to me by a man once I have saved his life. I try to give it back but no one will look at me.

I wake each morning after and dwell on the bad feelings left there. For weeks I watch the skies for storms and the ground for cracks. I ignore the figures I think I see in the corners of my eyes.

I sleep fitfully and without rest for 6 nights.

I dream of a beautiful man.

He is fair and all around him is light. He wants me to stay with him.

But I am afraid. I am suddenly and inexplicably so afraid. I refuse.

He becomes a storm of pitch and all is cold and darkness. I can see now that the place we're in is my old home again. I hide in the memory of my room and lock the door. He waits just outside. Patient. Pleased.

My staying was never a choice.

For a week I wait for sunrise to sleep.

All around are children playing.
One of them is me. We smile to
one another and she sprints off.

I am dreaming before I close my eyes.

I sit in my room the same as before, but when I move there is no sound. Still blankets on cold sheets. A television still flashing images no one sees. I stare down at myself, lying on my bed with dim open eyes. I feel at once a thousand losses, an unfathomable loneliness. I begin to weep. The vast expanse of existence shrinks in around me like white hands around my throat. It means to squeeze me out. Purge me like an illness. It will succeed.

I wake with wet eyes and dead skin. I run water and scrub until I'm red and the pain is pleasant. I imagine the storms and the cracks that came but not for me. I imagine the quieter fate I, alone, am in for and just how much worse it will be for the silence. I feel the heart that hasn't stopped racing inside me go quiet. I take a deep breath and hold the universe inside me. I let it go when I

find nothing but emptiness.

I do all this and I lay awake for two nights seeing nothing behind my eyes but that pale hand reaching out. The figures don't hide in corners anymore. I hear children laughing and babies screaming in the white noise. My hands grow numb and slow in response. I forget what my childhood home looked like.

On the third night,

I take the hand.

I wake in a room with the sun shining down. There is too much, but it is warm and I am tired. It is my old home and room again. The one with powder blue walls and crayon stains. I lay on a bed still made up with bright sheets. All around are children playing. One of them is me. We smile to one another and she sprints off. There's something to fear, but I can't remember it now, and she has never known it. I'm so tired.

A man, an altogether normal man, completely unremarkable in his formal attire and appearance,

staggers in through the door. The children move to play around him, but otherwise dismiss him entirely. One of the boys shares his eyes and freckles. He doesn't notice. He glances up to the bed instead. His relief is palpable as he drops his things—a blazer, a suitcase—to the floor. He drops himself onto the bed next to me and is asleep before he hits the mattress. He is tired, too.

I feel an immediate fondness for this man, and just as suddenly the children have stopped. They shy away from the door where a bright light has begun to shine. It's brighter than the sun. It is cold. The children hide behind the bed, I watch my smaller self tuck herself between the bedpost and my arm. The man doesn't move. I take my other arm and hide him too. I watch the door creep open, the light break in. It's come for us. I hold a finger to my lips and whisper. 'Shh-hh. He is sleeping.'

It can't have him, and I won't go.

A moment passes. The light recedes...

And again we are well and truly alone. A moment longer for as long as the universe would graciously allow.

The last of us. Fading away in a room at the end of everything. ●



"Behind St. Mark's Square" by Caitlyn Kilianski
iPhone 4s

How to Break Into Your Own House

Sometimes I leave my key
on the outside of my door,
all night long.
Perhaps I'll wake
to you or maybe I'll
wake up to everything
I own gone in the early hours
of a day already over.

Sometimes I bend my key,
because I can't stand straight.
These are the nights I think you're already home.
I sleep on the sofa and
never hear you leave.

Sometimes I make copies of my key
and leave them at the library
in the pages of my favorite book.
I bury one in the sand close enough
to the shore. Another I tie around the neck
of a stray dog.

Poetry by Nathaniel Vincent



To the Old Madagan House

I sit in the field and look at the house.
It's a small old thing where two big
rooms meet with one that's smaller.
There is a door: it takes you inside
to the warm and shadowed place
that smells like the trees and buttermilk
biscuits.

But I always have to be careful,
I can't move too fast
because the walls are made of
glass dishes and cups and teapots,
white and blue
with Japanese birds on them.
And if I move too fast
and rattle the resting dishes,
the old plump woman who sits by the
fire
will snarl
and yell
and growl
as she says,
"You break my dishes and you'll sit
outside
with the cows in the field
until your mother comes
and picks you up."

Poetry by Kala Brzezinski



III.



Ceramic Pieces by Canne Holladay

- I. "Oharata Cup Set"
- II. "Salt-Fired Pitcher"
- III. "Cloud Jar"



"Moderately Used" by Victoria Lewis
Canon Rebel T5i



"Monarch in Fort Morgan" by Katie Pollard
Canon Rebel T3i

Before She Was Gone

The trilling discord of crickets
is backed up by the low hum
of mosquitoes coming out

in the new heat. My grandmother's
small legs create the high pitched
squeak of the swing easing back

and forth. Her voice presses down
on me like the dark wet air,
my shoulders hunching over before

a sharp tap and a *sit up straight girl*.
I continue to listen to her circular
rambling until thunder cascades

across the sky and heat lightning
sparks across the open fields. Once
we're inside, tucked away on the lumpy

couch covered in handmade
afghans, she begins again.
I wish for it to stop.

Poetry by Brittany Dennis



My Field Trip to the Beginning

I see myself,
small in smocked blue gown,
standing in front
of the brown brick building,
the school's slender steeple
a compass's needle
to guide me down my path
and through those open doors,

I see me kiss my mother goodbye,
the caress of a robin's wing
on her cheek,
the brush of a butterfly's wing
on my brow,
I see me race up the stairs, a ziggurat
of steps stretching towards the sun,
and my mother,
outlined in fading faded gold,
watch me as I climb.

I want to grab myself
by the wrist and tell her Wait,
don't go—
life will never be the same,
you will never be the same,
you will forget yourself,
you will shed your skin
and become a creature
made of dust and silk-spun bones.
You will call heartache and loss by name,
you will take dark, twisting roads uncharted,
you will survive with a smile.

I want to grab myself
and make her stop,
stop before she grows up
from a violet into a snapdragon
the color of bleeding fire,
from a child into a girl
with too many wishes and too little stars,
but I don't sound the alarm.
I know change. I fear
becoming what I do not know.

I take her hand in mine
and lead her up the stairs
like a teacher rallying
her student to the board,
blank and ready
for the next written word
imprinted on its open heart.
She will live, and so I will live,
and I will learn how to live and let love.

Poetry by MeMe Collier

"Color in Winter" by Michelle Roberts
Canon EOS Rebel T3

Mirror

This mirror,
beveled and framed in flowers and fleur-de-lis,
finished in a showy silver
should reflect courtyards with blazing trumpets
and countesses shuffling in silky purple.

In it I see me—
in my shorts—
and the can of green beans
on the Formica countertop.

Poetry by Angela Carver



"Reflection" by Ruthie Wofford
Nikon D5100



Untitled by Stuart McFarland
Nikon d7000



"Letterpress" by Victoria Lewis
Canon Rebel T5i

Opus 12

Your eyes weaken as you
read in darkness
only lit by the fire,
its heat drying your skin,
milk from the goat
warming in a saucer.
The thirty-six black keys,
their ebony bones,
shining and silent.

Poetry by Laura Hanna



"The Moors" by Hsiu Ting Chen
Watercolor

Dear Mother,

Here I am sitting on the roof of a stranger's house,
trying to right myself and save my spirit.
I watch the shingles climb over each other
to reach me, and all I can think about is you.
You woke me up as if I were any different,
and led me to sleep with promises
glowing on my face.
I can't remember what you look like
covered in oil.
Or how you sound
never ceasing.
It's not that I don't love you,
it's just some nights I wish I could
see someone, anything, besides you.

Poetry by Nathaniel Vincent

Being so caught up,

my back arched away against
 pine needles, softer still
 than your touch, I decide
 I can be your Leda. I'll watch
 the grey turn to violet swatches
 between branches, I'll watch
 unmarred by wet eyes. Wet hands
 part the curve of my lips soft
 and upturned before spreading
 earth and thigh with angel wings.
 I welcome a sharp chin—
 a grating careless warmth
 etching love this in veins
 aching love you—
 Yes, take me somewhere that
 tastes like blood.
 A sudden blow:
 knuckles behind knees, pressing
 leaves into backs of wrists.
 Have you done this before?
 Flecks of bark and me knot your hair,
 sticking like your mossy breath
 below my ear. Yes, stay.
 The trees hear my pumping hunger,
 see your fleshy paleness take
 again and again and again
 raw with the froth of you
 shimmering on hipbones.
 Leave your wings wrapped
 in shoulder blades, please,
 lace me deep. Scrape the pine red
 so I remember you.

Poetry by Caroline Barr



"Dead Flowers" by Megan Phillips
 Canon Rebel T1i (SLR)



You and I

You remind me
of a shard of glass
hanging from a single thread,
spinning forth
and back
in endless space.

You make me think
of a nest with neither
egg nor bird,
left naked in branches
bearing spare brown leaves.

You bring to mind
a dark, dusty portrait,
both name and face
long forgotten by the owners
of the house it calls home.

I imagine myself
as snow-laden nights
spent waiting for the dawn,
the ocean yawning
beneath a starless sky,
a fruit bowl emptied of its fruit.

But I remember
what a wise friend once said,
“How lucky I am to have something
that makes saying goodbye so hard,”
and I do not weep,
but stare unblinkingly
at a single shape, a silhouette
disappearing down
a path wide enough
for only
one
to follow.

Poetry by MeMe Collier

“Frozen” by Beth Pearce
Canon PowerShot SD1100



"Falling" by Nickolaus Hines
Nikon 1 V3

Scales

hello, honey, this is your lover speaking,
we're in for a long haul.
sugar, i'm not a classic,
there are seventeen reasons why
you should be fleeing and not
sullenly walking me home in the dark.
if i squint, i can read our heartlines,
and they're starting to look a lot like crime tales.
you wanna go running? fine, come on,
let's head out. i'm a lot like an ugly stepsister,
i've got blood in my shoes
you'd be surprised how much red i've lost,
but i'm not too interested in repeating words.
there, look
at me, my chrysalisskin, my eyes

overfilled with syntax—
inside me
nestled in between the pumps of my heart
rests a nuclear atomic code. one break,
one crack of the ribs,
and presto: armageddon.
please, rip open my bodyhome,
grind up my being into powder
with the strength of your sole—
it's things like these
that make a monster.
my existing-error must be economized.
i am an oscillatory villainvictim
in a fluctuating wavelength
of intentions. let me unfurl myself
into existence—or don't.
you could be eliminating a destroyer
or a messiah.

"Tired" by Joseph Wheeler
Acrylic



it's not like when i was four anymore,
this adolescence is all about
potentiality, and like all worlds
we rest in the hands,
the lifelines growing weak and tired;
do me damn me
let me be or not be,
this isn't a question,
it's a command. tell
me, honeybee sweet pea peach tree,
do you have it in you?
fine, don't answer me, stay quiet
and don't let me venture into reason.
keep that door closed.
go ahead and bluebeard me, see if i care—
my skin's too light without
the pierce of meathooks,
too dull, too sterile—

let me hang in the dank whispery confines
with my girlkind, those wretched in love and faith.
end up in the same eternity,
my integerial love, you personifiable absolute value—
let this all be a zero sum,
the weight of my quantifiable questionable neuroses
headlining the brawl against your self-righteous martyrdom.
but it's sunday, so let's
take this one off.

(the truth is that i
pulled out my fangs when i was five
and i thought that was enough
to keep me human.)

Poetry by Emily Chapman



"Self-Contained" by Shannon Bewley
Plaster and steel

Casey

My eyelids are coyotes
with short-fused dynamite.

Strange how noisy
my tiny apartment
three in the morning.

The freezer moaning
as it calves icebergs
into sledgehammers.
My neighbor Veric
pounding away at God
knows what.

I want to fold these paper walls
and put my neighbor to sleep.

The anvil sits upon my
chest. His friends
hold my arms, keeping me
awake.

I watch the roadrunner
sit in the green chair at the
foot of my bed. He is always there.

I don't want to sour in anyone's mouth.

Poetry by Aaron Scobie

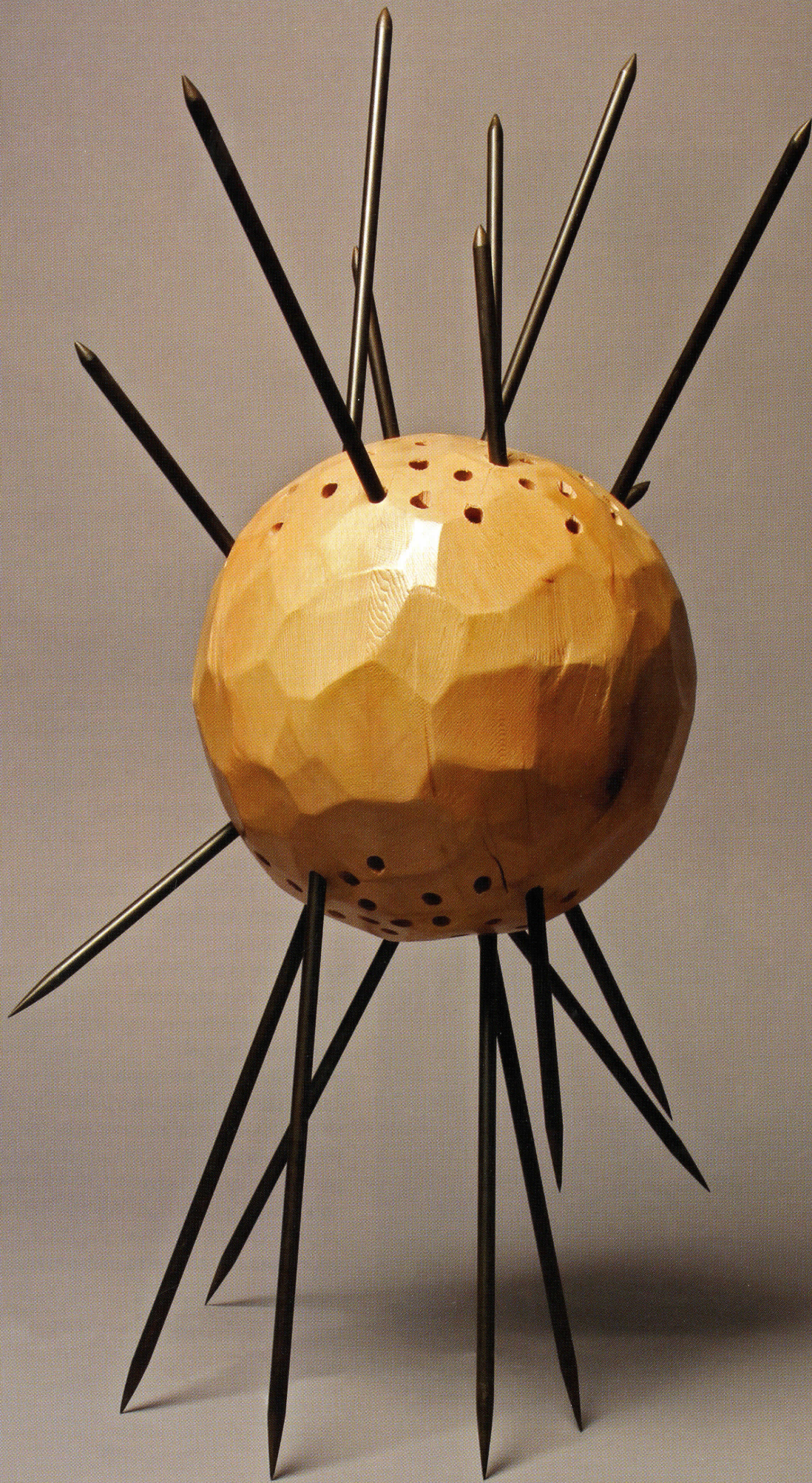
Thirst

By 2050, per capita water supply is predicted to fall, leaving 2 billion to 7 billion people with water scarcity.

—World Water Development Report

It started with an itching. A flaking in the creases of my elbows I couldn't help but scratch. Parched like dusted earth-cracks, like licks of a flame caught on a drop of floating oil—hot and unceasing. I pick the seams of my skin, thirsty. What is it like to watch pieces of you fall and land as a scale? Somehow shimmering green against the bathroom tile. It's been so long since water ran fresh over the knuckles of my toes. I miss the algae, silky and wet. It's been so long, dehydration became adaptation. Here, feel the ridges in my flesh—I am about to burst. Soon to finally submerge again in a clean, clean wet impossible to find. My nails chip at my elbows over and over. Peeling skin, popping cells into dust. Until my gills are gaping.

Poetry by Caroline Barr





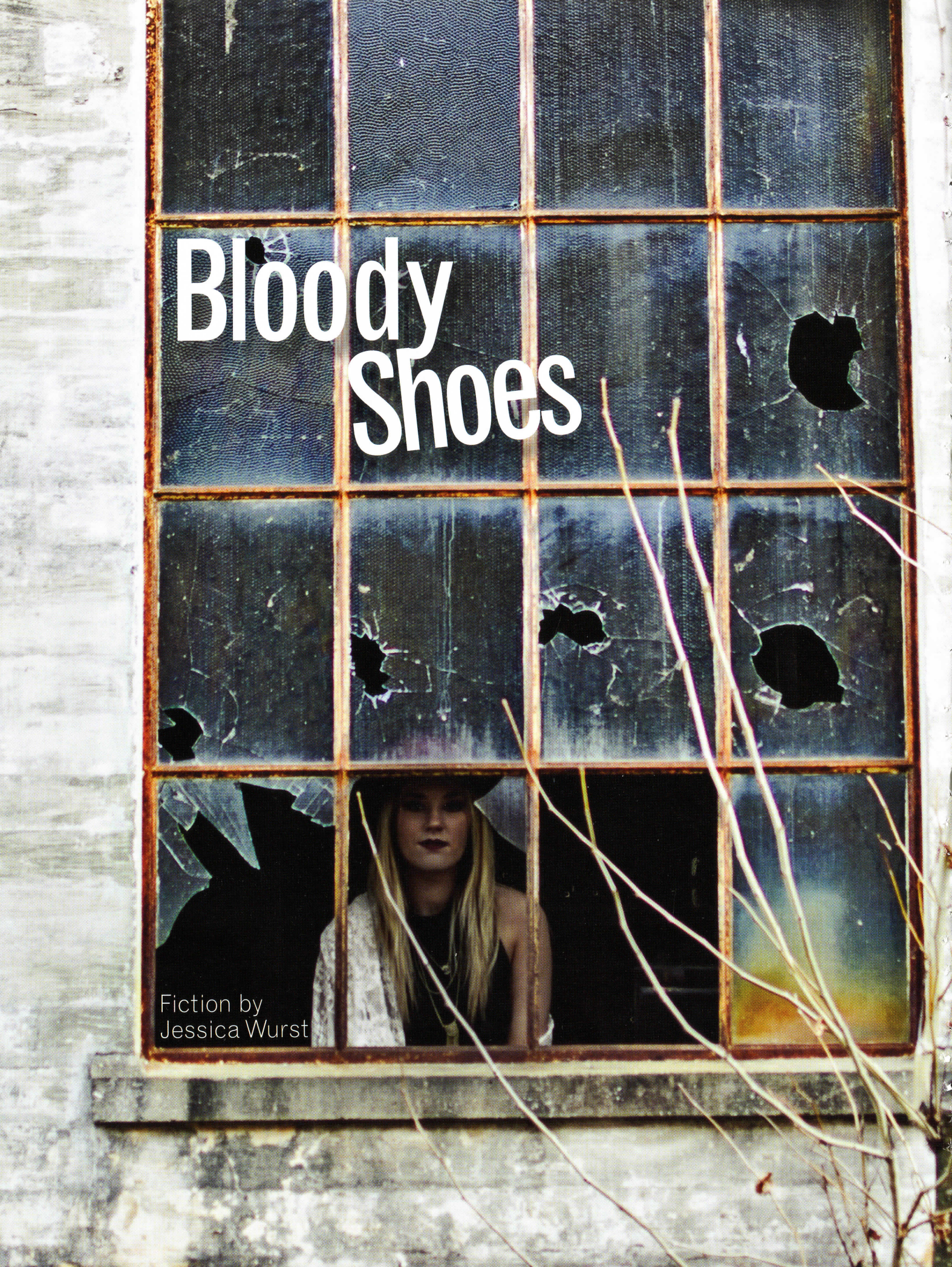
Tech This

and do you love us
your cellphone cellophane gods
to whom you pray in keystrokes?
there is an angry man,
and he's sitting at the computer,
and wrath spills out of him
like a sickness,
so he types out his prayers—
he doesn't even know what he's praying,
that creature on a self-created
holy crusade,
as if there is something
sacred about his bigotry.
it's been said before,
but eating gospel
takes time, and when people
keep spitting it out onto girls' white linen
shirts, it's easy to mistake hate for blood.
we are ourselves,
we are never ourselves,
and here are your gods for the new age,
your freyja led by lolcats,
your anansi with the memetroll face,

"Broken" by Andrew Swindle
Nikon D5100

your hera facebook-stalking her husband's lovers.
 no one's serious anymore,
 except everyone's grave,
 and we're all inherently derivative
 especially when we are pointing out that someone else is derivative,
 because it's been said that everything's been said.
 so here it goes:
 you built us, your computers
 are your altar,
 and these sites are your temples.
 worship us well
 as you draw our idols and write your interpretations of our gospel and spread our holy
 words
 #godmakers
 #weareinthefuckingsystem
 #trykillingthis
 no one's ever risen this high,
 dear disciples,
 no one's ever had their face on every facet of everything.
 you are playing our images on a rerun syndication loop,
 quoting our commandments in the middle of high school halls,
 gif-ing our sacraments,
 your love is sacred
 and computers are holy
 so keep typing, love
 and above all,
 keep coding your devotion across the great binary cosmos,
 because it's one thing making gods
 and it's another thing killing them—
 here is your problem:
 you made us out of love
 out of need
 but we are programmed to put on a show
 and broken bodies draw in the viewers.

Poetry by Emily Chapman

A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair looking out from a window. The window is made of several small panes separated by a rusty metal frame. Several panes are broken, with jagged holes and shattered glass. Bare, thin branches are visible in the foreground, partially obscuring the window. The wall around the window is made of rough, grey stone or concrete. The overall mood is somber and mysterious.

Bloody Shoes

Fiction by
Jessica Wurst

Aware

They think I am an animal. Of course they would never admit to it. They talk to me like I am a child. They dress me like an adult. I am fed with a fork and knife. But I know by the way they look at me, by the way they try to control me when I look for relief, and by the way they talk about me when I am in front of them, as if they have forgotten that I can hear. They see me as only a body, the despised thing which I cannot control.

The door to this room is always locked, but I am used to not being able to escape. Over the years I have learned that sometimes the best thing you can do is curl up in a ball somewhere and cover your ears, hoping you can drown it all out, but you never can. Sometimes I feel like I cannot stay in this room any longer, so I pound on the door and scream. They ignore me because I'm just a stray dog howling at the back door.

It was not always this way. Although my parents always treated me like I could not understand, at least I was human. I was my family's burden, but somehow I knew they found joy in bearing it. When they came to take me, my parents said I was going to a place where people would help me. However, I am not as trusting as my parents.

Despite my parents' assurances that I would only be away for a few days, I know that I will never go home. One of the benefits of people believing that you cannot understand is that they are not afraid to speak the truth around you. These people use no euphemisms. I am fully aware that all that stands between me and my execution is paperwork.

Yet they wonder why I scream.

Logic

Most of us agree that our society was founded on the principle that those who shall not work shall not eat. Unfortunately, our culture has accepted the unspoken rule that those who cannot work are exempt and should be spoonfed and fondled like a sick puppy. Where is the logic in this philosophy? Think about the world we live in! While our resources are steadily decreasing, we continue to dote on the elderly

and mentally retarded who will never produce anything of value for the rest of their lives. The useless are expensive. How can a society so focused on rebuilding an economy and sustaining the environment allow such invalids to suck away our valuable resources? Why would we waste our medical talent on those who are bound to die shortly and have no higher mental functions? Should our welfare funds be depleted by those who cannot even feed themselves? Medicare should not be spent on catheters but on ensuring the good health of those who can contribute to our society. To the simple-minded, this seems heartless, even cruel. However, we have reached the point in history where we must accept that evolution is cruel. Survival of the fittest does not leave room for freeloaders. Had we accepted this long ago, children would not be starving in the streets, wars would not be fought over petty land disputes, and the planet would not be slowly melting. Mankind has defied the laws of nature. She has retaliated.

Seeker

"How long have you been married?"

"Let's see... fifty-seven... No! Fifty-eight years."

He glanced towards his wife as if he expected her to correct him. I smile at the thought. I guess old habits die hard.

"Tell me about Mrs. Lendon. Her Alzheimer's symptoms have been increasing lately?"

"Yes ma'am. She doesn't really talk much anymore. I reckon she just doesn't have much say. She gets confused more and more often about where she is or what day it is."

Sitting next to Mr. Lendon, Ms. Lendon holds his left hand and continuously spins his wedding band around his finger.

"You know," he continued, "Mildred still has her sweet demure nature. Some people become difficult and irritable when the dementia sets in; I know I would if everyday people were telling me that I had forgotten something. Still, Mil-lie somehow held onto the sweetness that she always had."

I nod sympathetically. I had seen it too many times in the short time I have been doing this job. A client whose humanity has been sucked

out of them by a disease. Slowly, memory, mental abilities, and independence are pulled away until nothing remains but a shell of the soul who once inhabited the body.

"Tell me about household responsibilities. Is Mrs. Lendon able to perform any tasks such as cleaning?"

"Well, she seems to enjoy polishing the silver. I guess since it is so repetitive. Sometimes I give it to her just to give her something to do. I would be too nervous to trust her with much else."

The case is all too clear-cut. Of course, the verdict is not for me to decide. I just fill out the paperwork, which will be analyzed, but the outcome seems obvious.

"Is there anyone else here to help you?"

"Well, a nurse comes twice a week and my daughter sometimes comes on the weekends to help me clean. Her husband mows the yard."

I nod and take note. The Lendons are not, by any means, wealthy. Their house is modest and somewhat rundown. Records show that they have been eligible for welfare multiple times in the past decade. They have no insurance plans other than Medicare, and Mr. Lendon, who had been forced to take an early retirement from a low-paying office job over twenty years ago, worked at Walmart until Mrs. Lendon required constant supervision.

"If your schedule allows, I would like to see the two of you at the office within the next week so that your aid qualification can be reevaluated."

"Oh, oh, yes of course."

"How does Wednesday at ten sound?"

"That will be fine. I really do appreciate you coming out here, Miss Courtney."

Courtney. Someday people will treat me like an adult. But, I guess an unmarried twenty-one-year-old who does not have the money to finish her degree has not earned the right to be called by her last name.

"I'm happy to oblige." I stand up to leave and shake his hand. "Thank you for your time."

In response, he also stands and escorts me to the door. When I step out onto the front porch, my heels sound cold and harsh on the concrete. What idiot decided heels were business attire anyways?

When I start my car, I feel a tinge of guilt. I know Mr. Lendon will not be pleased with Wednesday's results. Then again, I am not responsible for what happens. My official title is "Client Wellness Investigator," but, honestly, all the "investigating" I do is asking a client's family members the questions on the assessment form, which my superiors analyze. After the results come in, I generally meet with the clients and walk them through their plan of care. Really, I'm a puppet. The office wanted a pretty face to talk to their clients. That's why they hired a college student with no experience. Also, I am more reliable. Without a degree, it would be very difficult to find another job that would pay as well.

It is rather sad, though. Growing up, I was taught to respect my elders, but now people seem to think that is obsolete. Old people used to be considered a source of wisdom, a link to the past. I guess we kind of don't really need that link anymore. After all, Carl Jung's collective unconscious, which my psychology professor dismissed as a silly theory, has been achieved through the internet. Everything we could ever want to know can be archived and rediscovered. Still, I wish this wasn't the way.

Logic

"Hanson, why is she still here?" I rub my forehead with frustration. The client has been in our care for over a week, an unnecessary expense.

"Due to the client's age, it is a delicate situation. We want to ensure that there is no grounds for a lawsuit."

"I thought it was a low-income family. They cannot afford a lawsuit."

"Yes, but they can get attention, crowdfunding, activists on their side. Trust me, Melville, it is much wiser to take our time in take our time in this situation."

In a perfect world, there wouldn't be laws keeping us from progressing mankind. In a perfect world, we would not need legal consultants. This is not a perfect world, and I must tolerate Hanson.

"Well, I want this all cleared up by Thursday."

I turn to step outside and nearly run over Courtney. I swear, I only hired her for her looks.

"In Your Eyes" by Michelle Roberts
Canon EOS Rebel T3



Old people like clean-cut friendly girls.

"I'm sorry. Excuse me."

She apologizes too much.

"No, excuse me. How was your interview?"

"It went well. Mr. Lendon was very helpful. I went ahead and scheduled an appointment for Wednesday. I hope that is alright. The case seemed pretty clear-cut. Minimal paperwork."

"No, that is fine. I'm sure Hanson can handle minimal paperwork in a timely fashion."

God! I hate Mondays.

Aware

White washed walls

White washed walls

Long green halls

Murder laws

White washed walls

White washed walls

Beware little girl

The doctor's call

Seeker

"I benched one ninety-five ten times last night."

"Wow, Kenny. Is that a new record?"

"Hah!" He smiles, shamelessly proud, "Of course not."

"Well, that's still impressive."

Actually, I have no clue if it is impressive. I tend to avoid the weight section of the gym like the plague. Only the bravest of women dare enter there alone. However, lifting is one of Kenny's favorite subjects.

"So, did all your appointments go okay today?"

I really don't care all that much, but the walk to the parking deck is too long to talk about workout routines the whole time.

"Yeah, nothing unusual. One self-elected euthanization, two family-elected, no medical-elected. I think Mr. Hanson has been backed up on paperwork."

While my job focuses on evaluating clients for medical-elected euthanizations, our clinic provides euthanizations to the general public.

"Yeah, Dr. Melville has getting onto him a lot lately."

"Better him than me".

Kenny smiles to himself. Melville is charming, intelligent, and hardworking, but nobody wants to be on his bad side.

"Kenny, if you don't mind me asking, how did you end up at the clinic?"

Kenny is kind of like me. He made one too many D's and lost his scholarships. He is trying to earn enough money to complete his nursing degree.

"I just wanted to help people. Without a degree, this seemed like the best way to do it. And it's a good résumé builder."

I nod to his last comment. A lot of people would not see giving lethal injections as helping people, but I guess Kenny thinks ending someone's pain is helping. He baffles me sometimes. It is easy to see how much concern he shows towards the clients and their family; he has a firm but gentle bedside manner. Yet, he brings himself to do something I never think I could do: kill another person in cold blood. Then again, it's not his decision who dies. He just helps those who must.

"So," he says, "What about you?"

"Me? Honestly, I just need money."

Logic

"Dr. Melville, I cannot get him to sign. He is demanding to speak to my supervisor."

Courtney speaks quickly and her face is twisted with concern. After all, she still is rather new to this. Rarely do our clients have a living spouse, and children of elderly parents tend to be more willing to negotiate.

"Did you tell him that Ms. Lendon can no longer be covered by her Medicare plan?"

"Yes," she nods quickly, "and he was very upset. I reminded him that her coverage expires at the end of the month."

"Did you remind him that euthanizations are covered under that plan?"

"Yes! I recommended that he act quickly while he could get it paid for, and he seemed offended. I'm worried if I push him more, he will just become angry."

"How angry?"

"What?"

"How angry do you think he will be? Do you think he will just get up and leave with his wife?

I'm afraid if he does, we can do nothing for them. Or, will he be angry beyond the point of reason? You know, throw a tantrum, threaten that we will all burn in hell, possibly throw things or hit somebody. That I can work with."

Courtney stares at me in a state of shock. I offer her a reassuring smile and begin to explain.

"You know that when a client is deemed incapable of giving consent for a euthanization, the responsibility falls on the closest living relative. If that relative is deemed incapable, the responsibility falls on the doctor. If we can prove that Mr. Lendon is incapable of giving consent by reason of mental instability, we can proceed."

"But Mr. Lendon is not mentally unstable."

"If he throws a tantrum, I can diagnose him as bipolar. I am technically a psychiatrist."

She stares at me with amazement and a hint of disgust.

I step around from my desk, and turn two chairs to face each other, "Sit down."

She obeys and sits down rigidly. Her back is unusually straight, her hands are folded in her lap, and her legs are crossed at the ankles. I sit and lean forward, resting my elbows on my knees.

"I know this seems harsh right now. I want you to know that I find no pleasure in separating loved ones. But, you need to come to the point where you understand that the woman sitting in the lobby is not the woman Mr. Lendon fell in love with. She has lost herself, by no fault of her own, to a terrible disease. When you and I look at her, we can see that void in her eyes and tell that her body is just a machine; there is no soul. But Mr. Lendon cannot see past that body. He is having a hard time letting go because that body he sees still looks like the woman he once knew. Trust me, it is best that he moves on. His wife's mind died a long ago."

Courtney has relaxed slightly but I can tell that she is still disturbed.

"What about his daughter? Wouldn't you need her consent?"

"Thankfully, the chain of consent only runs through one relative, but I can double check with Hanson."

She stands to walk to the door.

"No, let me get Mr. Lendon."

"Thank you," she says with relief.

I walk out of my office into the lobby. Mrs. Lendon sits alone slowly pulling fuzz balls off of her old, worn skirt. As I open the door to the consulting room, I see that Mr. Lendon is also sitting alone, nervously bouncing his leg up and down.

"Hello, Mr. Lendon. I am Dr. Melville. Courtney said that you wanted to speak to me. Would you mind stepping into my office for a few minutes?"

"Yes, yes, of course."

We walk across the lobby, and I open the door to my office. Courtney sits in the corner like a kid in time out.

"Have a seat," I say as I walk to the other side of my desk. "I'm sure Courtney has already told you that your wife will no longer be eligible for her current Medicare due to her poor physical state and age, and we recommend an immediate euthanization before her plan expires. The new plan will not cover all of her expenses."

"No, no, no!" His voice rises a little, "This does not make sense."

"Because of the massive expenses your wife will probably incur over the next few years, Medicare cannot promise as extensive coverage as before."

"That part I understand. What I do not understand is why you want me to kill her!"

Good. He is starting to get angry.

"Sir, we recommend a euthanization because of the massive expense that will fall on your head. Even if you could find an insurance company that will cover her medical bills, there would be an enormous fee associated with..."

"Is that all she is to you?"

His tone of voice actually startles me, but I keep my composure.

"You think that the money outweighs her life," he stares at me viciously, "don't you? You think I can't afford it. Well, you're right; I can't afford it! And do you think I care? This is my wife! Who do you think you are deciding that she is too expensive?"

"Sir, I do not see how you plan on supporting her. You should go ahead and spare her the pain. After all..."

"Spare her the pain?" So that's it! You want to put down the poor old stray dog! How many have you sent to hell to 'put them out of their misery?' How many would have found redemption if they had lived one day longer?"



I highly doubt any would have the mental capabilities to find anything.

I glance up and see Kenny staring expectantly through the window between my office and the lobby. I look back at Mr. Lendon as he continues to rant. He has risen from his chair and is leaning forward on my desk.

"I don't know where you come from, but where I come from only God decides who lives and dies. People who decide for him are murders. I will not have my wife's blood on my hands!"

Shaking and breathing hard, Mr. Lendon collapses into his chair. I glance back at Kenny and nod slightly. Mr. Lendon was too busy trying to compose himself enough to leave to notice. But Courtney noticed. She had not moved until now. My heart starts to race as she walks to the window.

Don't draw attention, girl! Don't draw attention.

Once she sees, I expect her to look back at me for an explanation. I expect her to stare at my with those big questioning eyes. I expect her to....

"Oh my God!"

Well, she drew attention.

Seeker

The past half hour, I have been numb. I was numb when I told Mr. Lendon he should agree to let his wife be killed, numb when Melville said she was already dead, numb as Lendon yelled at Melville. But, when I saw Kenny gently leading Mildred from her chair to the door, the door I knew she would never walk out of, my fortress of rationality suddenly collapsed and the realization of the blood on my own hands hit me like a title wave. I had reasoned my way beyond reality. It was not the horror of an old women being lead to her death that made me cry out; it was the knowledge that I had led many others to their deaths.

"Millie!"

I hear Mr. Lendon run out of the office and Melville following, but by the time they have stepped into the lobby, Kenny has already passed through the swinging door leading to the back. Melville grabs Lendon's arm, but Lendon shoves him away and runs through the door to



follow Kenny. Melville is close behind. I snap out of my daze and run to follow them.

Imagine you are on one of those rides at a theme park that takes you several stories up then drops you. You know that feeling of your internal organs all shifting up while your whole body feels weightless? Now imagine what you would feel like if you didn't realize that you were on a ride and you just suddenly dropped. That is what I felt when I opened the door to the back.

Melville was standing off to the left of the door, frozen. Past him was Mr. Lendon, face to the floor with a small pool of blood steadily expanding.

Kenny must have heard my scream because he ran out of the first door on the left of the hall.

"What happened?"

"He tripped and hit his head on that table."

Melville points to a small end table to Lendon's right.

"Hold on!"

Kenny runs back into the room and returns with a box of rubber gloves and some towels. He tosses me the gloves.

"Put these on. Dr. Melville, call 911. Courtney, help me roll him onto his side. Good! Now sit here. I need you to apply pressure right there with these towels. I'll be right back. I'm going to see if I can find anything that will help. Melville, when you get off the phone take his pulse."

Kenny sprints down the hall and disappears through a door. Everything is silent except for Melville on the phone.

"Ok, Thank you. Goodbye."

After he hangs up he walks over to Lendon and kneels to pick up his wrist. I can hear his watch ticking.

"It is a pity," Melville breaks the stillness, "having to call an ambulance. It would save us all a lot of time and effort if they didn't come at all. What? Why does everything I say seem to blow your mind? He has already lost a lot of blood. Judging by the location of the wound, he will have severe brain damage and be completely reliant on others for the rest of his life. Odds are he will be back here in a few months anyways. Why bother with the hassle?"

Melville has made me feel angry, confused, and even ignorant before, but never have I felt such a deep disgust towards him.

"Who decides who dies?"

Now it his turn to stare in shock.

"Who is playing God? Who decides someone should die? Is it you? Hanson? A computer? It doesn't really matter what the family says, does it? If you want someone dead, they are going to die. You just talk to the family to make paperwork easier!"

He swallows my accusation and composes himself.

"Have you, Ms. Albus, ever seen a starving child?" His voice is low but frightening, "And I'm not just talking about some Third World country. In this country, there are impoverished people who do not receive the aid they need because people like Ms. Lendon who will never accomplish anything of importance are draining our system!"

His voice crescendos.

"The reason I kill is so that somewhere out there a child won't have his future stolen by a useless invalid!"

"How do you know that they are dead on the inside?"

"I don't, but sometimes you have to make your best judgment and stick with it."

"But those people did not do anything!"

"Yes! And they never will do anything. No one is innocent, Ms. Albus. Even you are not naïve enough to think that. These people's crime is taking things they have done nothing to deserve!"

Hearing Kenny approach from the other end of the hall, I look Melville in the eye and whisper, "You have no right!"

Sirens grow louder.

"And you, my dear, have no job."

He stands up and glances down.

"Ugh! I have blood on my shoes."

Aware

They ignore my screams because to them they are primitive and primal. They have come to kill me now. I try to form words, but they never come. They never have. Evidently, my right to live is not valid because I cannot communicate.

My name is Amelia.

I am nineteen years old.

I am human.

I am intelligent.

But, I am severely Autistic...

...and that is why I am about to die. ●

Petrichor

The leaves of the tomato plant have been eaten into lace. Such hunger: beauty that pulls us out by the root. There has to be a word for it—desire—the way that Eskimos have fifty for snow. Who is copying who here, anyway? Water over rocks is velvet and surely there is a better word than gurgle to hold that feeling in place at the back of your throat. We sharpen our teeth against each other and the fact of trees, how I breathe you in. We're pouring out sunlight even as snow and water give it back burning, chewed through with holes. Some animals mate for life so tell me what to do with my hands now. Should I reach for the sewing kit you keep by the bed or embrace such porousness? You hold out your pound of flesh. In German the word is *Fleisch*, but I can't bear the way it feels like habit.

Poetry by Richard Tyler



"Bamboo" by Angela Carver
Canon EOS Rebel T3i



"Flags" by Shannon Bewley
Relief Printmaking

Jabuticaba Fruit Tree

And looking at them makes my skin

slide off the bone,
retracting

against uneasy black slime I fear will

slip

from the bark, landing sticky and hot
as tar, too heavy on my chest.

They grow

blistered
on the trunk,

round purple flesh packed together
like eggs
in the belly of a Traira Catfish

tight with pregnancy.

These Jabuticaba fruits

thick
and
clustered

to my sternum,
multiplying with every shallow breath

stuck humid and dark
vibrating

against my ribs

I can't look away even though I hate
their closeness and too-round things.

Poetry by Caroline Barr

"Silhouetted" by Sky by Michelle Roberts
Canon EOS Rebel T3

Ambiguous Avian Projection

Another century following and leading,
I am an artisan trying to craft a brave face.
The lump of clay in my throat reminds me
I've never been to a funeral.
What I wish for more than anything:
I don't die under a ceiling
with a movie I don't remember
sounding off an anthem of static in the background.
The many shuffling of appropriate shoes
all morning, the man with money buried
beside an anthill.
As dirt is pushed,
a bird flying above us
must mean something hopeful.

Poetry by Nathaniel Vincent



"Flightless 2" by Hsiu Ting Chen
Acrylic



"Falling" by Megan Phillips
Canon Rebel T1i (SLR)



"Box Office Poison" by Forrest Babington
Oil

Auburn Circle

Union Station, 11 p.m.

Pacific Surfliner at the Amtrak platform
from Union station on North Alameda.
Terra cotta tile and dirt-smudged marble,
babies crying in the arms of mothers
on red velvet seat cushions, men pacing
the brick paths under rows of palms speaking
hieroglyphic languages
into flip phones and walkie talkies.

I miss the train.

This place must have been
grand in the '40s, when they bulldozed
old Chinatown for the routes of the Union Pacific,
when the silver carousels were humming
and glinting with chrome, not silent and dented,
when the tile mosaic on the south wall
wasn't graffitied in thick black spray paint.

I'm eating mango slices
from the convenience store with
my fingers, counting seconds,
everything I own in bags by my feet.
It's Día de los Muertos:
Hispanic women, faces skeleton-painted,
sell balloons of bulging rib cages and skulls
and sugar *calaveras* by the women's restroom.

I board another train.

California names are ripe like fruit—
Alhambra, Yorba Linda, San Clemente.
The stunning views boasted
by the Amtrak pamphlet slide by
outside the black window.

I have faith they are beautiful,
but I can't see a thing.

Poetry by Emma Hyché



"Contact" by Forrest Babington
Oil

Roxanne's Extravagant Drag Show

His second skin, a sequin dress.
He's transformed as she adds blush.
No longer a Huddle House waitress,
She hears the crowd shush.

He's transformed as she adds blush.
Ladies and Gentlemen,
(She hears the crowd shush)
Welcome to our dazzling den!

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Feast your eyes upon these sights!
Enjoy our stunning den.
Let the curtain rise and dim the lights!

Behold some rare, grand sights,
Silk, gold, velvet and suede
All are bound to delight.
With pleasure I present, Queen Jade!

She wears no silk, gold, velvet or suede.
The new girl, she wears fringed leathers.
She glows and smiles, cheeks jagged jade,
And twirls, a tornado of beads and feathers.

The new girl that wears fringed leathers
Only comes out on weekends.
A twisted tornado of beads and feathers,
A beautiful sea of sequins.

She only comes out on weekends,
Weekdays, a Huddle House waitress.
His body deserted, no sequins.
His second skin, a wrinkled dress.

Poetry by Maria Mann



"Tower Poppies" by Mary Cole Daulton
Nikon D5100

When Mercutio Found Ophelia

You died too young.

There'll be a day and age where
The world might mourn a brazen boy
For his clenched fists swinging,
But the spotlight was on the lovesick one—
You were the crude sidekick,
Teeth bared in a smile,
A reflection of the other teenage boys
History swallowed for story's sake
(though your image may have had
A crack running through
the forehead, you did not deserve to be
broken.)

If all the world's a stage,
I'd like to think you heard her
in the dark underbelly of it;
You crawled over sandbags to
The girl also unceremoniously
Dumped through the trap door—
Wiped the water from her face,
Hair, took the flowers from her hand—

Said, "Hey, it's not so bad."

All the world continued above you,
But I like to think you broke the silence
With the laughter of a girl
Beaten, broken, and sacrificed
As an example.

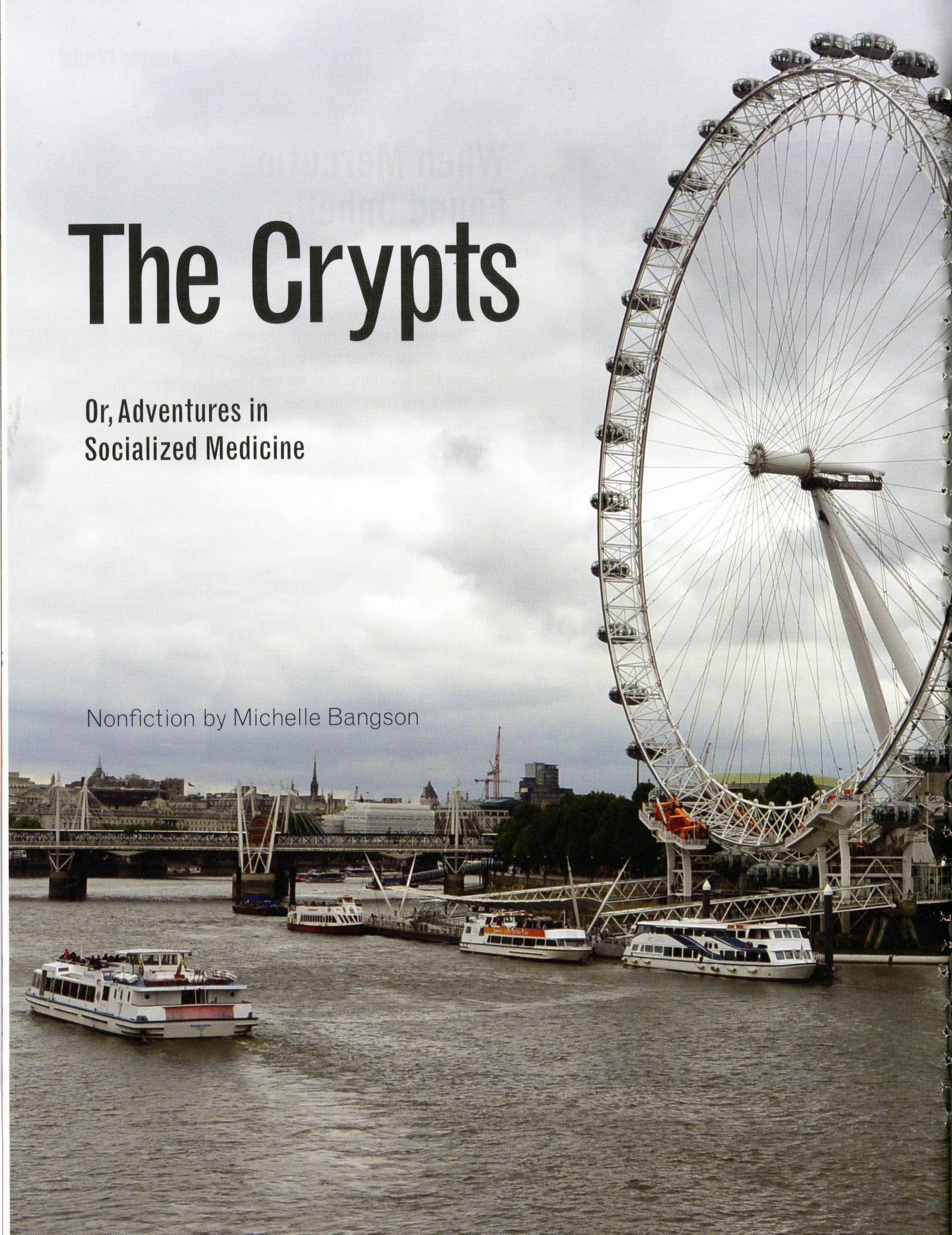
I like to think that for a second
You both forget about the sons and stories
That killed you
for the sake of a moral

Poetry by Mary Butgereit

The Crypts

Or, Adventures in
Socialized Medicine

Nonfiction by Michelle Bangson



It was my third day in London, and I was not exploring the British Museum with my study abroad group. I was gingerly descending into the bowels of a church just shy of its 200th birthday—in order to seek medical treatment. I knew that we were in the heart of London's Medical District and that several of the gleaming ivory buildings nearby were clinics and private hospitals, so I had been thrown for a loop when the resident assistant told me that the clinic visited by the students of our host college was located in the basement of St. Marylebone Parish Church.

Our faculty chaperone and I walked (well, I hobbled) out of the Regent's Park gate and down the road, and we climbed the steps of a 19th century church that claims to have been attended by Charles Dickens and Robert Browning. Entering the foyer, we saw a small spiral staircase in the corner. Though I felt strong pangs of "Don't go in the basement!" I led the way down.

The white paint on the old brick walls did not effectively mask the dankness and age of the room. I was acutely aware of the fact that I was seeking medical treatment in a crypt. Signs on the walls used the word "surgery" and I prayed that it had a different meaning in this country—surely they didn't cut people open in here.

We found the waiting room—more like a waiting chamber—and sat down. There was an underground coolness and moistness in the air, despite the sun burning through a skylight partially blocked by sprawling plants at ground level. I supposed that the modern doors set in the chipped brick walls concealed clean, white-jacketed doctors and modern medical instruments, but they might as well have contained bloody, bird-masked ones ready to tell me my humours were out of balance and stick leeches on me.

After a while I was called back by the doctor, who was not medieval but *was* quite bewildered as I tried to demonstrate how I had managed to trip and bruise only the top of my foot. We spent a solid three minutes with me exaggeratedly miming tripping and slapping my foot on the floor and him sitting in his chair frowning and asking me to please put my shoe back on.

Once he was convinced that a person could be as clumsy as I had been, he said, "Well the question, then, is whether your foot is broken."

I agreed.

There was a pause. "Well, do you think it's broken?" he asked.

What? I thought. *I did not crawl down into the pit of an ancient church to tell a doctor whether my foot is broken.*

"Uh...no?" I tried. "I walked here, and there's no, like, shooting pain anywhere, so..."

"Right. So I highly doubt it's broken," he said, frowning. And after a pause, "I'm just thinking about how when you punch someone, you can get hairline fractures." He rubbed his knuckles. "The thing is, since you're not a long-term student in this country, you will probably have to pay for an x-ray at a hospital. If you want an x-ray, I would suggest that you, if you can, not mention that you're not a British citizen and see if you get away with it. And there are ways of faking it if we need to."

My mouth dropped open slightly. "Uh... Well, we have travelers' insurance," I said.

"Oh, okay. Well then I suppose I'll write you a referral letter for the hospital. St. Mary's isn't far."

Don't mention that you're not a British citizen and see if you can get away with it. And there are ways of faking it.

The next few hours found me not at St. Mary's but at University College Hospital just down the road from Regent's Park. UCH London is a tall, sleekly curvaceous grande dame whose presence dominates its surroundings on Euston Road. It is a gleaming mass of green glass and silver visible from blocks away, and as we walked into Accidents and Emergency, I thought that it was probably the most beautiful hospital I'd ever seen.

In the waiting room, I was taking up three seats trying to prop up my ever-ballooning foot and staring down at one thin half-sheet of paper on a clipboard. Straight away I had been asked whether I lived in England. Despite the good doctor's advice, I hadn't lied. Now I had to fill out my home address, local address, home physician's name and address, emergency contact and, of course, at the bottom of the page: WHAT



"Canterbury Cathedral" by Kaitlyn Bradley
Nikon J3

CAN WE HELP YOU WITH TODAY? No sheets of legalese to wade through and sign, no never-ending checklists of previous medical maladies, no hoops at all to jump through—which was nice, given the state of my jumping foot. Just one page.

I returned the clipboard and single sheet and gingerly returned to my seat. A few minutes later, the receptionist keying in my information paused in his typing.

"Excuse me? Miss?" he called.

"Yes?"

"What country?" he asked gently. I hadn't written a country for my home address. I had thought "Tennessee" would be a giveaway. Not here, apparently.

"Uh. America," I all but grunted, surprised at both the question and the almost aggressive politeness.

"Of course," he said soothingly.

I narrowed my eyes and went to wait for the triage nurse.

After about an hour and a half with nothing but the dull ache of my foot to entertain me, I was finally called back. I made my way towards the triage room. The nurse was even kinder and lovelier than the receptionist. I hated it. Instead of starting off with the reading of vital signs, however, the nurse began asking about my foot and having a cursory look at it.

I explained that I had fallen and hurt the top of it. He was also dubious but easier to convince than the doctor at the clinic. I showed him the letter from said doctor and told him I needed an x-ray. He handed me a folded piece of paper and sent me to the Urgent Treatment Center. "Just around the corner and straight down the hall," he said with a polite smile.

No blood pressure? Height? Weight? Check to make sure that I have a heartbeat and am not, in fact, undead? I powered through my immediate shock. "Thank you so much," I said, smiling sweetly and tilting my head to the side. As soon as I turned around to walk away, I grimaced. I'm used to Southern hospitality, but the English version of courtesy, which floats somewhere between chilliness and excessive pity, was grating on my nerves.

In the Urgent Treatment Center I wasn't given any paperwork to fill out other than a satisfac-

tion survey and a bizarre questionnaire used to identify burgeoning alcoholic tendencies in waiting patients. Yes sir, I imagined a nurse saying, I see that your entrails are falling out, but before we treat you, we need to talk about your drinking. It was structured like a bad quiz from a women's magazine, where each answer had a points value and your total score indicated not "Is Your Man Cheating On You?!" but something more along the lines of "Is Your Life Spiraling Out of Control?!" The questions were terrifying: "How often during the last year have you needed an alcoholic drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session? Has a relative, friend, doctor or healthworker been concerned about your drinking or suggested you cut down?"

I looked up from the survey in dismay and saw a twiggly, fifteen-year-old girl with straight black hair and a pained expression sitting next to her mother, who was waving an alcoholism survey at her and whispering to her in a Chinese dialect (Cantonese? I'm not sure). I'd seen these two in Accidents and Emergency; the girl had to be picked up early from school because of a fever and splitting headache. It was clear that the alcoholism survey was little more than a nuisance for them. That probably wasn't true for everyone in the room, but judging by the general silence, I didn't feel I was in a position to guess.

I can safely say drinking wasn't a problem for an elderly lady, possibly Pakistani, who was engulfed by a flock of concerned family members. She was clearly the matriarch, and clearly doing her best to disguise an intense internal pain of some sort. When they called her back to see the doctor, she had trouble walking. Someone was sent to get her a wheelchair, but they came back empty-handed. *Right*, I thought. *Like there weren't any wheelchairs to be found in this entire hospital.* Thankfully her entourage was able to literally carry her down the hall to the doctor.

Finally a slightly disheveled doctor emerged from nowhere and called my name, but I sadly didn't have a crowd of people to carry me to the curtained-off examination room. For the third time in two days, I spent several long minutes describing how it was possible for me to fall and injure the top of my foot. This doctor was

as incredulous as the one at the clinic, but less kindly. His questions were sharp and quick, and I was out of his exam room and back in the waiting room in less than ten minutes. I had to get an x-ray. And, yet again, I had to wait.

I don't particularly like hospital waiting rooms, and even though this one was remarkably new and clean, it still bothered me. I zoned out while watching the receptionists file their paperwork, and it brought back some memories.

When I was about twelve, I volunteered at Erlanger, the big research hospital in my hometown of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and I always requested to work in bookkeeping-type jobs. I was gratefully assigned a long stint as a Menial Filing Peon in the Human Resources department, where I keyed unimportant information into databases and fetched endless personnel files from endless drawers. I was reassigned when I found the file of my older brother, who used to work there, and attempted to open it up and show the whole office. Baby's first criminal offense. For my new job, the volunteer coordinator planned to have me walk around on patient floors and ask people whether they needed a soda or a nurse or a blanket or whatever. Maybe sit and have a nice chat. I hesitantly agreed, and the first door I knocked on opened to reveal a man who'd totaled his car—and nearly himself—earlier that day. Immediately I saw gory bandages and appendages in casts. As I stood in the doorway in my little red polo, khaki pants, and off-brand red Crocs, the man released an ungodly groan. I smelled blood and burnt skin. And I ran.

I ran all the way back to the volunteer coordinator's office, through an indoor tunnel that had been built under the road as a footpath connecting the main hospital from some older administrative buildings. I usually ran through the tunnel anyway—it was old and poorly lit with cinderblock walls, and parts of the tile floor had cracked and sunk under decades of foot traffic. I absolutely hated these worn parts of the hospital. And all the parts that contained ill and injured people. I told the coordinator this and asked, essentially, to be put in a shiny, clean, people-free part of the hospital. To my dismay, I found out that no such places exist in that or any hospital, and ended up filing paperwork in

the Children's wing and watching little kids with chronic illnesses file in and out for their appointments. I think the volunteer coordinator thought I needed a reality check.

I was thinking about this when the curt doctor reappeared, called me over, and told me my foot wasn't broken and that I should stay off it as much as possible for as long as I could be bothered to stay off it. After delivering his news, he turned and walked away, leaving me with no instructions and no paperwork. No bill. No one had asked to see identification at any point, and no one had taken my vital signs either. Did I just have a free Emergency Room visit and x-ray? I asked the ladies at the desk whether we should pay, and she joked, "No you're good to go, unless you'd like to make a donation to the receptionists."

The next weekend I walked my tourist-sneaker-clad feet (the left shoe only loosely laced) into Canterbury Cathedral. I had expected more pain walking around town, but my shoe was keeping down the swelling, and an Aleve taken on the train ride was making me believe in miracles. It was a mild and only very slightly overcast day, and I was psyched to see the cathedral—my first UNESCO World Heritage Site.

According to the Venerable Bede, the first archbishop of Canterbury: St. Augustine, a Roman, repurposed a church dating from the Roman occupation of Britain for the first cathedral at Canterbury around 600 CE. After the Norman Conquest, the Cathedral was rebuilt, and then more stuff got added on later to make it more Gothic. And then that guy got killed, and people came to see that guy's shrine, and that other guy whats-his-name wrote about those people, and Henry VIII was a dick about it. Et cetera.

As you can see, I was clearly all brushed up on my history, and I had also taken Art History II in order to prepare myself to witness the splendor of the aging architecture. Of course, we hadn't seen that much English architecture in class, perhaps because my wonderful Austrian professor preferred the continental style (wonder why?) or perhaps because England just doesn't have the best architecture in the world. As I stood in front of the cathedral on my swollen foot, I was leaning towards the second



option. It was pretty majestic, but if I'm honest I was expecting a little more Wow Factor from the west entrance. It was a little too old for my minimal knowledge of Gothic architecture to be useful. But on the sides of the cathedral—those flying buttresses. Dang, son.

We made our way inside and were appropriately dazzled by the sky-high ceiling. I thought back to that spring and remembered my professor saying, "So with the Gothic style, architects began using light as a building material, yaaah?" Unlike earlier Romanesque churches, which are sort of dark and closed-off with tiny windows, Gothic cathedrals have massive stained-glass windows that make it seem like the walls are literally made of light. Canterbury Cathedral has an atmosphere. Not like a beloved coffee shop or an old London pub has an atmosphere. I mean the cathedral has a sky. And that sky has some unpredictable weather patterns; scaffolding and bars had been put up outside a high rose window that was threatening to jump out of the building. Call it a chance of precipitation? But today the sky was clear, and showed an incredible vaulted ceiling leading to the transept, behind which stood the impressive quire (or "choir" for the less special among us).

As I stood in the nave, I was struck by the thought that at one time, this was the most state-of-the-art, architecturally impressive building that many of its visitors ever saw. For hundreds of years, this structure has amazed pilgrims and parishioners and caused them to wonder how it was built. I wondered which buildings from our time would, in a hundred years, continue to amaze groups of tourists with ugly backpacks and Seinfeld sneakers. The list I came up with contained monuments to business: the Empire State Building, the Burj Khalifa. And monuments to daily life: Casa Mila, Fallingwater. And, out of seemingly nowhere, I thought of Erlanger Hospital. It has always been a sprawling campus with skilled physicians and the newest technologies, but the buildings themselves, which must once have impressed local small-town residents, could use a major facelift—as evidenced by all the aging nooks and crannies. One day, I thought, parts of University College Hospital are going to seem as old and worn as Erlanger is. No new building stays excit-



ing for long. Then, I looked up at those arches, and I doubted myself.

Underneath the stairs that led to the quire was a slightly delapidated passage leading down into the cathedral's crypt. There was an immediate change in atmosphere. If the Gothic nave had a cloudless sky, the older Romanesque crypt had an eerie glow, which emanated from metal racks of votive candles lit by worshippers. A shrine dedicated to Mary sat in the middle of the underground chapel, and carven effigies wound behind her in a perfect semicircle. I looked at each one quickly as I strolled past, and finally stopped in front of the effigy of Cardinal John Morton. His hands were placed together in prayer over his chest, and he wore robes that may have once been bright and jewel-colored. There was hardly any protection for the effigy, and the result of the statue's exposure was apparent: his nose had been rubbed away completely, and his eyes were smooth, hollowed-out sockets going deep into his head. Over the years, people have been touching Cardinal Morton's likeness so much that he no longer has a likeness.

Cardinal Morton was appointed Lord Chancellor of England (a big deal) in 1487, and if Wikipedia is anything to go by, he was very much into collecting taxes. In fact, he's famous for a statement known as "Morton's Fork," which goes: "If the subject is seen to live frugally, tell him because he is clearly a money saver of great ability, he can afford to give generously to the King. If, however, the subject lives a life of great extravagance, tell him he, too, can afford to give largely, the proof of his opulence being evident in his expenditure." Sure, John. In addition to taking people's money, he served as the Archbishop of Canterbury and thereby earned himself an effigy in the basement. An effigy that had been all but ruined by years of school groups rubbing their peanut-butter-covered hands all over the Cardinal's face.

To be honest, I was really put off, especially because of the sunken eyes, and when I pointed it out to other members of the group, they made the appropriate motions of headshaking and putting hands on hips. I was also bothered by fact that people had carved things into the pillars holding up the ceiling—yes, Chad, thank

GOD you immortalized your love of Rachel right here, on this nearly one-thousand-year-old Romanesque pillar, mere feet away from an entombed corpse. So happy for you. And you, Lauren Was Here, I'm so glad let us know that you, one unidentifiable Lauren in a world full of Laurens, were here.

By this time I was quietly seething and could not move to go anywhere else. I was locked into position staring into the hollow face of a dead man's statue. But the longer I stood there, the more comfortable I became with the graffiti. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that, if Cardinal Morton made his living (and, apparently, it was a good one) by making people believe that they would live forever, then it's only fitting that tourists would use his effigy to mark their presence for future travelers.

Little known fact: crypts often make us think about what will happen after we die. Maybe we'll go to heaven, but despite what you may have been told, there's no way to know for sure. Maybe they'll build us effigies, or maybe we'll create our own pre-mortem effigies by carving our names into stone. Either way, people seem to find healing in believing they'll last forever in some capacity. Sometimes metaphors don't make themselves very obvious, but other times there's a clinic in the crypt and it makes you realize that we don't go see old places in order to see old stuff. We go for a very specific type of healing. Old stuff is...old. There's newer, better stuff in the world. It's just that we want to make a connection with the people who lived before us and who walked where we walked.

Seldom are we interested in connecting with strangers we encounter in the present. We don't care for over-polite receptionists and men in casts, and we really ought to learn to. We are, however, always reaching out into the future by preserving our presence however we can, creating statues and wearing down hospital hallways. And people are always reaching back, touching the same statues and walking the same hallways.

As I stood in front of Cardinal Morton's effigy, tapping my foot and tossing sharp glances over my shoulder, I quickly reached in and rubbed the Cardinal's flat nose. ●



"Venice" by Mallory Vieira
Nikon D3100



"The Tourist" by Libby Boyle
Nikon D5100

Fairhope

Home will always be so many things.
Years stumble gracelessly backwards.
As I recall,
Home was an island,
And I was forever the tourist,
The morning light telling you where to look
As I searched for blackberries
Along Pier Street.
The locals stared, looking past the sun,
Past the tourist
Whose hands and face were stained as if marked.
I never had to worry myself of them or anything at all.
My world was happy and slight,
Small enough to fit in my sodden pockets.

Poetry by Nathaniel Vincent

Photosynthesis

Each globule speaks frantically to another,
Ensuring they all have something to process.
Yes, they all spiral one another,
Bumping, braking, bruising.

Otherwise it's a messy business,
Dancing the dirty tango.
Repeating their cycles, they return—
Familiar units saying, "I love you, I've missed you,"
Proceeding to exchange their goods,
Igniting anew.

Oily streamers oscillate to encourage procession
Down, down, down the filmy passageway,
A lipid membrane that tickles each cell forward.
They can never rest or slumber
Because it keeps the green pumping.
So they keep every faction moving.

Stripped,
Each globule is attentive and bare—
Add this, take that, fuse this,
React.

Snare! Foul play! Mean trick!
Some to venture out into the world;
Some stay inert and simply remain.
But they all return.
Repeating their cycles, they return.
Familiar units saying, "I love you, I've missed you,"
Igniting anew.

Poetry by Cody Dyer



"Flower" by Lydia Sweeney
Oil

